PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
CITY OF RALEIGH

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Purpose of the Guidelines

Planning is a proactive approach to future decision-making. Public participation is an essential element in a planning process. A legal requirement in some circumstances, increasingly municipalities are looking to involve a broad spectrum of residents early and continuously in the parks planning process. Public participation is the process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision-making[1]. As a means to increased transparency and public confidence in local government, public participation provides a mechanism to assess, determine, and where possible, address the needs of citizens during the planning process. Public participation encourages the exchange of information, ideas, and values between citizens and parks planning staff.

The purpose of the *Public Participation Guidelines* is to present and describe formats, methods, and techniques for the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department and Raleigh citizens to work in concert to plan, design, and develop park lands, greenways, and recreation facilities. More specifically, it is designed to assist the Department to adhere to the eleven principles of public participation contained in the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Public Participation Policy for Park Planning. The *Public Participation Guidelines* describes four pathways for effective public participation. It presents a set of best practices for using those pathways effectively to achieve quality planning, process legitimacy, and improved capacity of citizens and Department staff to become skilled at effective participation.

Best practices, for the purpose of this report, are defined as ways of thinking about and accomplishing specific tasks for public involvement. Best practices can include methods, processes, or activities that can assist in achieving a particular process pathway. Rather than rigid standards, best practices are considered practical guidelines.

As practical guidelines, best practices are a means to augment or enhance the planning process within the context of institutional constraints. The process guidelines presented here are designed to encourage and facilitate broad public participation by engaging citizens, community organizations, and other agencies throughout the planning process. The intent is to ensure that the planning process remains transparent and that timely information is available to those who want to learn about or can engage in a parks planning process.

[1] James L. Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement*. Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, 2005, p.7.

It is recommended that the *Public Participation Guidelines* will be reviewed at least every three years in consultation with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Parks and Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board, interested citizens of Raleigh, and an external consultant. Future enhancements and improvements will be based on ongoing evaluations of the planning processes.

Four Pathways for Public Participation

Public involvement in parks and recreation planning and development can be organized in many different ways using numerous techniques, processes, and communication media. Participation processes are commonly tailored to specific circumstances, drawing on elements or practices to suit the context and audience. It is helpful to think about public participation as a continuum of approaches, with the degree of public autonomy and influence in public decisions increasing as one moves along it. The continuum ranges from receiving information about a public action or decision, to actively providing recommendations in that decision. In these *Guidelines,* four points along this continuum are recommended as ways for the Parks and Recreation Department to orient and structure its public participation program. The four pathways are Outreach, Information Exchange, Feedback and Consultation, and Consensus Seeking. Depicted in Table 1, each pathway is described in terms of its purpose, the implicit pledge to the public in its application, formats, and examples of how it has been used by the Department in the parks planning, design, and development processes.

Along the continuum, the intensity of public involvement and the degree of citizen influence in park planning and development decisions increases from left to right. In addition, as one moves from left to right, the purpose and implied promise of each pathway may be reflected in a subsequent pathway. For example, Consensus Seeking might also incorporate the other 3 pathways: Outreach to make the public aware of the upcoming planning committee process; Information Exchange to gather information about the proposed planning process or future activities related to the proposed planning process; and Feedback and Consultation with other citizen groups to support the planning committee's efforts.

Public participation is often thought of as simply keeping the public informed about departmental or agency actions or decisions. Although ***Outreach*** is an essential component of a public participation program, it is only one point on the continuum of public participation approaches and is often combined with other public participation pathways. ***Outreach*** as an end in itself may be appropriate when a single course of action has been determined in a routine decision process, or when general awareness of a particular project is important.

Information Exchange is the practice of multi-way communication among the Department, neighbors, park users and interest groups to insure that all parties are better informed prior to a decision or action. Sharing data and opinions with citizens can help to identify problems and alternatives, describe potential consequences of various alternatives, and help to develop proposed actions. Exchange processes can be designed to keep the public informed and to gain an understanding of the interests and needs of people who will be affected by park and recreation planning decisions. Information exchange can take place in a number of settings including public meetings, internet forums, focus groups, and surveys.

A ***Feedback and Consultation*** process involves citizens in park planning and development decision-making in a more intense and sustained way than information exchange. The public is consulted throughout the planning, design and development process in public forums where people gather to learn about a project and provide their input and opinions about the best development alternatives. The outcome of a well designed, well run feedback and consultation process is that the public's advice, concerns, and aspirations are directly reflected in the development alternatives, and the Department keeps the public informed of how it used this information in the final decision making process.

In other circumstances, the department may wish to seek consensus on planning and development decisions through a collaborative problem-solving effort. A ***Consensus Seeking*** process can provide the highest level of public acceptance for park planning, design, and development. Even though final decision-making authority rests with elected officials, the public can influence decision-making and assist the Department in making informed choices by helping to define the problem, generate a range of alternatives, develop evaluation criteria and make recommendations. Public involvement in a ***Consensus Seeking*** process is typically intensive and long-term, and participants are usually representatives of organized interest groups or individuals who can articulate shared interests of a broader public such as homeowners and business owners. Decision making often takes the form of consensus that requires opposing interests to work together to develop a common and mutually acceptable solution in ways that voting and other approaches to decision-making do not.

Understanding the purpose of taking one pathway over another is important. Achieving the intended purpose and fulfilling the implied promise to the public requires following recommended practices and procedures. The *Guidelines* provide a set of best practices and recommended techniques for each pathway in the section titled, ***Best Practices***.

Settings and circumstances vary across planning and development processes in terms of scale, intensity and diversity of public interest, and history. Knowing which public participation pathway to take for a given circumstance is critical. The section titled ***Public Participation Process Selection Guide*** provides criteria and thresholds to assist the Department in making appropriate choices among public participation processes.

Public participation processes benefit from engaging in self-assessment and design correction as they proceed and after the fact. An evaluation process that tracks progress and helps the Department learn from its successes and failures is a necessary component of a successful public participation program. The section on ***Evaluating Public Participation Processes*** provides some methods for assuring continued improvement and public satisfaction with process designs and outcomes.

Table 1. Four Pathways for Public Participation[2]			
Outreach	**Information Exchange**	**Feedback & Consultation**	**Consensus Seeking**
Purpose Provide citizens with timely and objective information to understand the problem, alternatives, consequences, and proposed actions.	**Purpose** Exchange data and opinions with citizens to identify the problem and alternatives, describe the consequences, and develop proposed actions.	**Purpose** Consult with the public throughout the planning, design, and development process to ensure citizens' concerns, aspirations, and advice are considered.	**Purpose** Partner with the public in each aspect of the planning, design, and development process to identify and analyze various options, recommend creative solutions and find common ground among competing points of view.
Promise to the Public The Parks and Recreation Department will keep the public informed about the planning, design, and development process of the projects.	**Promise to the Public** The Parks and Recreation Department will keep the public informed, work with citizens to exchange data, opinions, and options for park planning processes, and provide feedback on how the public influenced the decision-making process.	**Promise to the Public** The Parks and Recreation Department will work to ensure that citizens' concerns, aspirations, and advice are reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how the public influenced the decision-making process.	**Promise to the Public** The Parks and Recreation Department will partner with citizens in formulating potential solutions, and incorporate recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Formats Project websites, fact sheets press releases	**Formats** Open houses, listening sessions, public comment, focus groups	**Formats** Community meetings, task forces, advisory boards and committees	**Formats** Planning committees, ad-hoc working groups
Examples Construction status; greenway map; bond program advertisement	**Examples** Playground design	**Examples** Hill Street Park master plan	**Examples** Forest Ridge Park master plan

[2] This public participation continuum is adapted in part from the *Spectrum of Public Participation*, International Association for Public Participation. Available at: http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf.

Best Practices

This section describes each pathway and suggests best practices and techniques to accomplish them. Best practices, for the purpose of this report, are defined as ways of thinking about and accomplishing specific tasks for public involvement. Best practices can include methods, processes, or activities that can assist in achieving a particular process pathway. Rather than rigid standards, best practices are considered practical guidelines.

1. Outreach

An effective public information program is designed to help the public learn about a particular project, be informed about an ongoing project or the status of a long-term project, and/or make an informed choice about a particular project or activity. It provides citizens with timely and objective information to understand the problem, alternatives, consequences, and the proposed actions. It is critical to the credibility of the Department and the legitimacy of the planning process that the information provided be objective and balanced.

Some examples of techniques for getting information to the public include public service announcements, briefings, exhibits and displays, information repositories (web sites, public libraries), media interviews, and the internet.[3] The online Public Participation Toolbox of the International Association of Public Participation lists several techniques including information about the advantages and usefulness of a particular technique, as well as the disadvantages.[4]

Best Practices for Outreach:

1. Ensure information shared with the public is complete and unbiased, and similar to what is shared with decision-makers. If decisions have been made, describe those decisions and the rationale behind them.

2. Maintain transparency. Be clear, direct, and open in your communications about Department actions and opportunities for citizen input.

3. Develop a strategic communication plan with clearly defined goals and objectives in order to track progress.

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[3] Creighton, James L., *The Public Participation Handbook : Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement.* Washington DC. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 2005.

[4] International Association of Public Participation. *IAP2'sPractitioner Tools: Public Participation Toolbox,* 2006. Available at www.iap2.org

4. Outline the planning and decision making process, and maintain communication throughout the life of the project.

5. Develop, a “process map” of your information and outreach activities, events, and dates that you can give to anyone interested in the process.

6. Time the message so that the public has opportunities to act on it.

7. Tailor message formats and outreach techniques to the intended audiences. Be sure to include under-represented audiences in your outreach plan such as the physically challenged, youth, and non-English or bi-lingual speaking communities.

8. Vary message formats and outreach techniques.

9. Partner with community organizations, businesses, clubs, other agencies, and other social networks to broaden your outreach efforts.

10. Have your materials reviewed by other organizations or departments to test the information for its usefulness and perception of trustworthiness.

11. Incorporate a level of accountability that provides status reports to the intended audience at determined intervals.

12. Provide consumer education on all aspects of parks and recreation governance, including the functions and responsibilities of the department and the public participation opportunities.

Techniques for Outreach[5]*:*

1. **Exhibits**

   Exhibits that display information about a potential planning project or the status of a current project can be very effective communication tools. Exhibits can be particularly effective when located in a public place where a number of local residents have the opportunity to see the exhibit and ask questions of knowledgeable staff that monitor the exhibit. Several public venues to consider include county and street fairs, schools, organizational meetings, and association meetings.

2. **Direct Mailings**

   Mailings can be targeted to a specific user group or neighborhood, or can be broadly distributed to a large, undifferentiated audience. The format may vary depending on the

[5] For a thorough description of these techniques, see J.L. Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement*. Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, 2005, pp.89-101.

amount of information you are trying to convey. A signed letter is most useful for detailed information targeted to a specific group or neighborhood. Post cards, brochures and newsprint articles are effective for wide distribution, each format suited to varying amounts of information and detail.

3. **News Conferences and Media Briefings**

   A news conference is an event to which you invite the media and at which you make an announcement or give a briefing. News conferences are usually reserved for major announcements. The primary advantage of a news conference, particularly when you are dealing with television and radio, is that your message may be repeated several times during the day in news breaks and during regularly scheduled news programs. They are also useful for stimulating the interest of the media in doing feature news stories.

4. **News Releases**

   News releases are designed to make an announcement about an upcoming event or discuss a decision that has been made. Be sure to include the most important information in the first three sentences of the release.

5. **Newsletters**

   Newsletters are an effective way of keeping the people who are most interested in park and recreation issues informed at a level of detail difficult to achieve through other media. Newsletters are a means of sustaining interest throughout decision-making processes that span weeks or months. Newsletters can be focused on specific park planning and development activities and targeted to key audiences. For controversial issues, newsletters can be distributed to a large audience to ensure that all interested parties are kept informed. A newsletter with plenty of graphics and written in simple language will usually be widely read. Although newsletters require a significant investment in staff time, email and website posts can reduce production and distribution costs. Of course, like any outreach technique, newsletters must be written objectively. On particularly sensitive issues, it may be worthwhile to have newsletters reviewed by a citizen advisory group or peer review panel. In highly polarized situations, a newsletter could be published by another government agency or a neutral organization.

6. **Presentations**

   Arranging presentations to civic groups, user groups, business associations, environmental groups, homeowner associations, and neighborhood groups is an effective way of communicating with interested and influential people. You may want to tailor your message somewhat to each audience to match their interests.

7. **Internet Web Sites**

   The internet can serve a number of functions for outreach:

- An information repository or library, providing access to all documents and reports that are used during the planning process;
- A way to quickly broadcast information about meetings or events to large numbers of people who have an interest in the planning project;
- A forum for interested citizens to post comments, messages, and documents for others to read, or to engage in a continuing discussion of the issue;
- A mechanism for people to respond to alternatives under consideration or comment on study progress.

2. Information Exchange

An exchange of data and opinions with citizens can help to identify problems and alternatives, describe potential consequences of various alternatives, and help to develop proposed actions. The purpose of information exchange processes is to keep the public informed and to gain an understanding of the interests and needs of people who will be affected by park and recreation planning decisions. Giving citizens an opportunity to communicate their concerns, problems, and alternatives improves the Department's decisions and outcomes. Information exchange sessions are typically organized around open houses and exhibits, small interactive public meetings or workshops, question and answer sessions, focus groups, and internet-based discussions. Information exchange processes differ from feedback and consultation processes in that they usually take place in a single event or meeting, and therefore are not sustained over time.

Best Practices for Information Exchange[6]

1. Publicize opportunities for information exchange to audiences who will be affected by, or can affect the planning decision. Email, letters, post cards, web site postings and any other creative mechanisms are appropriate.
2. Prepare materials that will be distributed at the activity.
3. When publicizing information exchange events and activities, clearly state the purpose of the activity and process, and the roles of Department staff and participants.
4. Schedule activities at times and locations convenient to key audiences.
5. Encourage participation from under-represented audiences as well as the public.

[6] Practices 9-12 are contained in the EPA brochure, *How to Review and Use Public Input, and Provide Feedback*, US EPA, National Center for Environmental Innovation, available at http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/policy2003/policy2003.pdf.

6. During the event or activity, state the purpose and the goals of the overall process.

7. Clarify the roles of the Department staff and participants, the chief role and priority of Department staff being to listen to feedback and concerns.

8. Establish basic ground rules for all meetings and events.

9. Provide feedback on comments received from the public. Telling people what the Department did with their comments helps to build a solid relationship with stakeholders.

10. If you are seeking comments at a particular information exchange event or feedback opportunity, be sure to prepare specific responses to each comment made by a member of the public. These can be compiled in list form and distributed to stakeholders via email, website postings, or other information repositories.

11. Don't wait until the end of the comment period before compiling comments, read them as they come in.

12. Sort comments by key words and group the ideas. Think about how to make use of the ideas contained in the comments to reach a fairer and more durable decision.

13. Incorporate a level of accountability that provides status reports to the intended audience at determined intervals.

14. Provide consumer education on all aspects of parks and recreation governance, including the functions and responsibilities of the department and the public participation opportunities.

Techniques for Information Exchange

1. **Exhibits**

   Exhibits that display information about a potential planning project or the status of a current project can be very effective communication tools. Exhibits can be particularly effective when located in a public place where a number of local residents have the opportunity to see the exhibit and ask questions of knowledgeable staff that monitor the exhibit. Several public venues to consider include county and street fairs, schools, organizational meetings, and association meetings.

2. **Surveys**

   Surveys and polls are methods for getting quantitative, and in some cases qualitative, information and opinions from citizens. They can be used to measure the proportions of opinions in the community and among segments of the community. Polls and surveys can be administered through a variety of methods including face-to-face, postal mail, telephone, and the internet. Polls are a specific type of survey, usually repeated at regular intervals to determine trends and changes in opinion. Both methods must adhere to strict statistical design standards to guarantee reliability of findings across a specified population. As such, they should be designed and administered by skilled professionals.

3. **Open Houses**

An open house is a public gathering opportunity that has no strict time frame. People can drop in at anytime during the event, gather information about a proposed project, and provide feedback through a variety of media including comment cards, sticky notes, flip charts, and computer interfaces. An open house should be designed to allow one-on-one discussions between experts and citizens or informal discussion among small groups. A common open-house design consists of stations staffed by Department staff and consultants; each station addresses a particular aspect or feature of the project. Participants have an opportunity to ask detailed questions and provide feedback at each station.

4. **Focus Groups**

A focus group is a structured small group interview. The purpose of a focus group is to develop a broad understanding of the groups' perceptions, views, and range of opinions and to generate a deep understanding of a particular topic. The interaction among focus group participants can often stimulate more detailed and thoughtful responses than a one-on-one interview. Hence, focus groups are considered an effective method for gathering insights, responses and opinions from a targeted audience. Typically comprised of 8 to 12 people, a focus group can last approximately two hours. A focus group is not designed to achieve consensus about a particular issue.

5. **Workshops**

Workshops are highly interactive public meetings, usually designed for a group of 25 or fewer people. They usually revolve around completing a specific task or assignment such as identifying interests or ranking alternatives. They are useful for working with complex topics because they provide time for detailed consideration and a high degree of interaction. Large audiences can be broken down into smaller discussion workshops so that everyone can participate in the discussion. When dividing a large audience into small working groups, it is important to ensure diversity among groups. One method of achieving small-group diversity is to randomly assign people to a group as they check in to the meeting.

3. Feedback and Consultation

Feedback and Consultation processes employ methods of face-to-face information exchange that allow significant input and feedback in planning decisions. They are usually sustained over time. In a successful Feedback and Consultation process, the alternatives developed by the Department directly reflect the public's concerns and aspirations. Consensus recommendations among participants are not sought (although consensus may occur), and as a result, alternatives arising from these processes usually contain features that some participants or interest groups do not support. City Council makes the final decision based on recommendations made by the Parks and Recreation staff and feedback from the Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Advisory Board.

To gather this type of input and feedback, the Department can hold open public meetings if the interested public is large and diffuse, or form advisory committees if the public can be adequately represented by a small group of people. Public meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend, provide repeated opportunities for input, and are useful for gathering information from a large population. Advisory committees have a defined and consistent membership. Both participation processes provide citizens with an opportunity to provide opinions, develop and refine plans, or suggest courses of action.

A single planning process may employ both formats – open public meetings and targeted advisory groups. Public meeting formats may be appropriate early in a process for the purpose of formulating the problem, when organized interest groups have not yet formed, or when there may be affected groups that are unorganized. As interests become more organized and the needed information becomes more specialized, it may be useful for the process to become more formalized and less open to new participants.

Best Practices for Feedback and Consultation

1. Publicize public participation opportunities to audiences who will be affected by or can affect the planning decision. Email, letters, post cards, web site postings and any other creative mechanisms are appropriate.

2. Prepare materials that will be distributed at the activity.

3. When publicizing public meetings, clearly state the purpose of the activity and process, and the roles of Department staff and participants.

4. Schedule meetings at times and locations convenient to key audiences.

5. Encourage participation from under-represented audiences as well as the general public.

6. During the event or activity, state the purpose and the goals of the overall process.

7. Be clear up front about program constraints and priority program elements. Citizens can participate more effectively if they know what the constraints and expectations are for their participation.

8. For processes that span more than one meeting, provide a “process roadmap” fact sheet that illustrates how the process unfolds over time, what is being asked of the public at each meeting, and expected outcomes from each meeting.

9. Clarify the roles of the Department staff and participants, the chief role and priority of Department staff being to listen to feedback and concerns.

10. Establish basic ground rules for all meetings and events.

11. Decide how the public’s feedback will be tabulated and evaluated and inform the public of that decision.

12. Prepare summaries of each meeting and make them easily available to the public in a timely fashion.

13. Maintain participants’ contact information to follow up and keep them informed about the process and resulting decisions.

14. Provide numerous venues through which people can participate. Integrate a feedback and consultation process with other types of processes such as open houses, exhibits, and on-line chat rooms.

15. Use a neutral facilitator in situations where the issues are complex and potentially divisive.

Techniques for Feedback and Consultation

1. **Public Meetings**

Numerous alternative public meeting formats can be used, depending on the purpose of the meeting, the size of the expected audience, and the desired level of interaction among the participants.[7] If the primary purpose of the meeting is to inform the public, then a large, general meeting may be appropriate. If the purpose is to achieve agreement or concurrence in some form, then smaller, more interactive formats can be more constructive.

If a large audience is expected, breaking the meeting down into small discussion or work groups can increase interaction. For very large audiences, the use of small group formats requires significant logistical planning and support. It may be helpful to alternate meetings between large group formats and small group formats. For example, the initial meeting may be

[7] J. L. Creighton, *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*. Program for Community Problem Solving. Washington, DC, 2005, p. 147.

a large format meeting with the emphasis on providing information. The audience can then be subdivided into smaller working groups later in the meeting and/or for future meetings, and reconvened as a large group for the final meeting.

Seating arrangements are an important consideration for all public meetings and should be determined by the desired direction of information flow. If the purpose is to provide information (one-way information flow), then an auditorium seating style with experts and Department staff in the front and the audience seated in rows facing them may be appropriate. If the desire is to promote audience interaction (multi-way information flow), then people should be able to make eye contact with one another. This can be accomplished by arranging seating in a semi-circle or at round tables of eight to ten people each, banquet-style.

The basic framework for each meeting should be structured to accomplish four process objectives:

1. Providing process information and guidance such that people know what is expected of them, how the process will unfold, how information will be used, and the stage of the process the group is in .
2. Engaging the audience in activities through which participants can provide consultative advice and feedback.
3. Summarizing actions taken/decisions made at the meeting and laying out a clear plan for what's next.
4. Gathering evaluative feedback on the process.

Specific meeting tasks should include something similar to the following:

1. Review the purpose of the meeting, the process to be used to achieve it, and ground rules that govern group discussion.
2. Get agreement on what you hope to accomplish with the public during the meeting.
3. Discuss how you will use the information you receive from the public.
4. List the agenda or steps that will be covered.
5. Engage the audience in meeting activities to achieve the level of interaction you need to get advice and feedback. Allocate time to the various topics and activities.
6. Bring the group back together to summarize the actions taken and to develop next steps.
7. Provide an opportunity for verbal and written feedback on the meeting.

2. **Advisory Committees**

Advisory committees can be established to provide detailed feedback and consultation in a planning process. Committees should consist of people representing various park and recreation users and user groups, or fields of expertise to advise the Department on its proposed actions. General principles that should be observed for advisory committees are the same as those for Consensus Seeking processes (see pp. 16-18) and are not repeated herThe decision rule distinguishes an advisory committee in a Feedback and Consultation process from a planning committee in a Consensus Seeking process. Since Feedback and Consultation is not attempting to reach consensus, the ground rules and meeting protocols will differ from those of a Consensus Seeking process. An advisory committee may decide to use majority voting to make decisions. Although voting is expedient and provides direction based on majority sentiment, it can be problematic for a number of reasons:

1. Although advisory committees should be broadly representative, it is unlikely that representation of interests on the committee will be proportionate to the interests of the public at large. A majority vote may merely represent an imbalance of the committee rather than the view of the majority of the public.
2. A split vote isn't all that helpful to the Department since that could have been determined without convening the committee.
3. A broadly divided group serves little purpose if the objective is to get substantive feedback and consultation.

Instead, an alternative decision process uses what James Creighton[8] calls "getting a sense of the meeting." The meeting leader listens carefully until there appears to be a consensus, states this is his or her "sense of the meeting," and checks to see if it is acceptable to the group. If this method doesn't yield agreement, the meeting leader should ask how to resolve the controversy. The group can continue to deliberate until a sense of the meeting is reached. Alternatively, the group could vote using a supermajority, or use majority and minority reports.

The basic framework for a committee meeting is the same as it is for a public meeting. The same four process objectives should be accomplished.

4. Consensus Seeking

The Department can use a Consensus Seeking process when the Department desires to partner directly with the public to identify and analyze various options, recommend creative solutions, and find common ground among competing points of view. The outcome of a Consensus Seeking process is a recommendation for park and recreation design and development that moves directly through the approval process by the PRGAB and City Council. Technical expertise and the professional judgment of Department staff are integrated with the public's dialogue, deliberation, and the recommendations that result.

[8] Creighton, James L., The Public Participation Handbook : Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement. Washington DC. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 2005, p. 186.

Citizen involvement is typically intensive and long-term. Participants are usually invited to be part of the process and attend a series of meetings. Participants are typically representatives of organized interest groups or individuals who can articulate shared interests of a broader public. Decisions are reached through consensus, which requires opposing interests to work together to develop a common and mutually acceptable solution in ways that voting and other approaches to decision-making do not.

Consensus Seeking processes are appropriate when planning decisions may be highly controversial and active cooperation of affected groups is needed. They are also helpful for overcoming a stalemate and bringing closure to decisions on proposals or issues where concurrence is needed from key stakeholders.

Prior to engaging in a consensus-seeking or collaborative decision-making process, a convener is strongly encouraged to conduct a situation assessment. Preparation increases the likelihood of successfully meeting your goals, and a situation assessment is an excellent preparation tool. More information about how to conduct a situation assessment is contained in Appendix A, *Situation Assessment*.

Best Practices for Consensus Seeking

In 1997, The Environment/Public Disputes Sector of the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution published *Best Practices for Government Agencies: Guidelines for Using Collaborative Agreement-Seeking Processes.* The publication reflects the experiences of government officials and dispute resolution practitioners throughout the country. Their effort generated a series of practical guidelines for municipal or other governmental agencies to consider when bringing people together to seek consensus around a major initiative. The following is a summary of the key recommendations and best practices for consensus seeking processes. (Note, two practices listed in the document, “first consider whether a collaborative agreement-seeking approach is appropriate,” and “an assessment should precede a collaborative agreement-seeking process.” Because these practices are applicable to all public participation processes and are addressed elsewhere in these *Guidelines,* they are not included below).

1. Ensure that stakeholders are supportive of the process and are willing and able to participate.
   a. Invite participants who will be affected by, or can affect the decision outcome, and have an interest in parks and recreation. They should be representative of park users or user groups, be seen as credible by the constituents whom they represent, and have a means of communicating with their constituents (not all participants need to have a constituent base).
   b. Ensure that representation on stakeholder groups is balanced and captures key interests associated with the issues to be deliberated.

c. Develop a stakeholder group application form that captures information about key interests and the expertise of the applicant relevant to the park and recreation issue being deliberated, and connections to groups or organizations with a vested interest in the issue.
d. Schedule meetings and activities at times and locations convenient to participants and key audiences.
e. Make it easy and convenient for participants to access information about the process.
f. Maintain a master list of contact information on participants; in particular, follow up and keep participants informed about the process and future decisions.

2. Support the process and ensure sufficient resources to convene the process.
   a. Seek concurrence of the City Council and the PRGAB in the design of the process and selection of participants.
   b. Keep City Council and the PRGAB informed and up-to-date on the status of Consensus Seeking processes.
   c. Budget sufficient staff time and resources to the process.
   d. Department staffing of the project should remain consistent throughout the duration of the process.
   e. Be prepared to provide additional organizational or technical assistance to participants that lack these resources.
   f. Use a neutral facilitator to help design and manage the process.
   g. Fully integrate project design and development consultants in the process. This is most easily accomplished when the facilitator is associated with the consulting firms.

3. Develop a charter and ground rules that are agreed upon by all participants including the Department (See *Appendix B, Example of a Planning Committee Charter and Ground Rules*). The charter should:
   a. Clearly define roles and responsibilities of participants, Department staff, consultants, facilitators, and others involved.
   b. Define the authority of participants with respect to decisions made by the group, the Department, the PRGAB, and City Council.
   c. Define what the final product or output of the process will be.
   d. Define how decisions will be made (see *Appendix C, Making Consensus Work*).
   e. Make provisions for changes in group membership.
   f. Specify time lines, milestones, and deadlines.

4. Ensure the facilitator's neutrality and accountability to all participants (See *Appendix D, Selecting a Facilitator*)
   a. Ensure that meetings are facilitated by impartial, skilled facilitators.
   b. Ensure that the facilitator is acceptable to all participants.
   c. The facilitator should not serve as the Department's agent, but should be accountable to all participants.
   d. Facilitators should serve as advocates for the principles that underlie collaborative consensus-seeking processes.

e. Facilitators should not be advocates for any participant's point of view on any substantive issue.
f. Facilitators should advise participants when, in their opinion, the process no longer appears to be meeting its objectives.
g. Facilitators should withdraw from the process if their continued involvement is not acceptable to the group.
h. Facilitators should not be engaged to carry out other kinds of non-neutral activities for the Department while they are under contract to facilitate a consensus-seeking process.
i. Facilitators should disclose when they have continuing or frequent contractual relationships with one or more of the participants.

5. The Department and participants should plan for implementing the group's recommendations from the beginning of the process
   a. Maintain contact information on participants and follow up with them to inform them of project status and implementation steps.
   b. Ensure accountability standards are followed and evaluations occur on a regular basis.

6. Policies governing these processes should not be overly prescriptive
   a. Avoid including overly prescriptive language in Departmental policies and Council resolutions and ordinances that governs how these processes are structured, organized or conducted.
   b. Ensure that flexibility is built into every consensus-seeking process.

Techniques for Consensus-Seeking Processes

Consensus-Seeking processes may be organized in a number of different ways. Frequently, different formats share practices and techniques in common or a single format is flexible enough that it can integrate techniques that are usually associated with other formats. Rather than identifying specific techniques for Consensus-Seeking processes, it is more helpful to identify the basic steps or stages of the process. In this way, the Department can ensure that Consensus-Seeking processes are structured and organized to accomplish these steps.

1. Assess the issues
   - Identify conditions for collaboration
   - Develop a clear description of the issues that need to be addressed
   - Frame the problem as a joint search for resolution of the issue: "How can we?"

2. Identify stakeholders
   - Determine what (or whose) interests are at stake
   - Identify who can affect - and who is affected by - the issue
   - Contact stakeholders and determine their needs for participating in a collaborative process

3. Evaluate assessment information
   - Review the data gathered in the situation assessment
   - Using predefined evaluation criteria, determine whether convening a collaborative process is warranted
   - If the decision is to proceed, develop a process design that incorporates recommendations from the public and best practices in the field.

4. Design a strategy
   - Consider the most productive format: committee, negotiating team, or conference format
   - Agree on process steps
   - Identify roles and who might fill them: chairperson, facilitator, recorder, technical resources, meeting logistics, etc
   - Plan your time frame

5. Set up the process
   - Decide on logistical details: where and when to meet, agenda, etc
   - Draft the group charter and meeting ground rules

Once all the stakeholders have been contacted, the first meeting convened, and the protocols ratified, the participants can begin to deliberate the substantive issues

6. Establish procedures
   - With the whole group, ratify the meeting ground rules and charter drafted in the planning phase; Make changes where necessary

7. Educate each other
   - Share concerns related to the topic
   - Identify what is given
   - Identify what is understood
   - Identify sub-issues
   - Identify and share interests -- reasons, needs, concerns and motivations underlying participants' positions -- rather than assert positions

8. Define the problem
   - Define the present situation
   - Define the desired future

9. Specify information needs
   - Identify technical background information that is pertinent to the issue
   - Identify information that is available and information that is needed
   - Agree on methods for generating answers to relevant technical questions, or a path to follow even if no technical consensus exists

10. Educate each other (again, and whenever it is needed)
    - Use field trips, briefings, interviews, etc
    - Collect data, reports, etc.

11. Generate options
    - Use task forces for larger groups
    - Ask the public and interest groups
    - Brainstorm
    - Use expert opinion

12. Develop criteria for option evaluation
    - Whether it meets the desired future
    - Feasibility
    - Fairness
    - Efficiency

13. Evaluate options

14. Reach agreements

15. Develop a written plan or recommendation
    - Document areas of agreement to ensure a common understanding of the participants' accord
    - Develop a plan of action: what, how, when, where, who

Once an acceptable solution has been identified, it must be approved and implemented by all responsible parties. During Stage 3, the objectives of the collaborative process are to:

16. Ratify the agreement
    - Parties get support for the plan from organizations that have a role in carrying it out
    - Each organization follows its own internal procedures as it reviews and adopts the plan

17. Integrate the agreement into the public decision-making process
    - Governing bodies and agencies not directly included in the process have been kept informed during earlier phases of the process
    - Plan is considered and acted upon by the Department, PRGAB, and City Council for implementation

18. Implement the agreement
    - Maintain communication and collaboration as the plan is carried out
    - Monitor your results
    - Renegotiate, if necessary

- Celebrate your success

Public Participation Process Selection Guide

Given that public participation is best understood as a continuum, the four pathways of public participation can be applicable for the various parks planning, design, and development processes. The *Public Participation Process Selection Guide* will assist the parks staff and other planning staff in determining an appropriate pathway for a particular planning situation. There are seven planning, design, and development processes:

1. Park and Recreation Master Planning, Plan Revision, and Plan Amendment
2. Park and Recreation Facility Design and Development (30% construction drawing review)
3. System Integration Planning
4. Park and Recreation Facility Major Renovation and Redevelopment
5. Ad Hoc Studies such as Feasibility (of a specific project or action), Costs/Revenue, or a particular singular issue charge from City Council
6. Strategic Planning (city-wide topic such as aquatics, cemetery, dog parks, invasive species mgmt, etc)
7. Comprehensive Park System Planning (broad, city-wide, as in reference to the 2030 Comp Plan or proposed update to the supporting "Park Plan")

Selecting the appropriate public participation process requires a clear understanding of your public participation goals and knowledge of the park planning and development context. Start first with your goals. Public participation processes yield better results if the intended purpose is clearly defined and understood by the Department staff <u>and</u> the public. A clear goal shared with the participants, integrated with a plan for how the outcomes of the process will be used, increases the likelihood of acceptance of Department decisions and the public's willingness to engage in future participation efforts.

Knowledge of the context surrounding the planning and development activities is critical for applying the appropriate public participation process. The context is defined by the following variables:

- Representation and communication with key interest groups
- Level of interest by citizens in the community
- Level of conflict and mistrust
- Degree of complexity and uncertainty

Information about the context can be gathered through a *situation assessment* (See Appendix A). A situation assessment is an analysis of the local situation, typically conducted through a series of interviews with key stakeholders. The assessment is centered on two basic parameters that will shape the public participation process: the issues that are important to stakeholders, and the characteristics of those stakeholders relative to the proposed park planning and development action. Critical elements are trust, and history of conflict. The more complex the situation, and the more that people are in conflict over a potential park development action, the more deliberate and collaborative you should make your process. This Selection Guide combines the public participation goals with knowledge of the park planning and development context to yield a preliminary recommendation on process selection. Rate the context according to the scale provided (pp. 24-25). Combine with your outreach goal to identify the most appropriate public participation process.

1. Outreach

Use an ***Outreach*** process if the goal is to…

- Give information

and

- The *Highest Group 1 Score* is **2**
- The *Total Group 1 Score* is **less than 9**
- The *Highest Group 2 Score* is **1**

2. Information Exchange

Use an ***Information Exchange*** process if the goal is to…

- Give information
- Gain information
- Get reactions to proposals
- Learn about concerns
- Build common understanding
- Help allay controversy due to misinformation
- Gain insights into the views of stakeholders while retaining the authority to make a final decision

and

- The *Highest Group 1 Score* is **3**
- The *Total Group 1 Score* is **less than 13**
- The *Highest Group 2 Score* is **2**
- The *Total Group 2 Score* is **less than 9**

3. Feedback and Consultation

Use a ***Feedback and Consultation*** process if the goal is to…

- Integrate technical information for improved decisions

- Reach agreement on planning options prior to decision making
- Stimulate joint thinking to solve persistent problems
- Involve stakeholders in developing creative solutions
- Work through stakeholder concerns while reserving decision making power

and

- The *Total Group 1 Score* are is **12 or greater**
- The *Highest Group 2 Score* is a **3**
- The *Total Group 2 Score* is **less than 15**

4. Consensus Seeking

Use a **Consensus** process if the goal is to…

- Involve stakeholders in developing creative solutions
- Work out a mutually acceptable approach with parties who have the power to block implementation
- Make decisions in highly controversial situations
- Achieve voluntary cooperation from affected groups
- Overcome stalemate
- Bring closure to decisions on proposals or issues where concurrence is needed from key stakeholders

and

- The *Highest Group 1 Score* is a **5**
- The *Total Group 1 Score* is **16 or greater**
- The *Highest Group 2 Score* is a **4**
- The *Total Group 2 Score* is **15 or greater**

PARK PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

GROUP 1 QUESTIONS - Focused on Scale of Activities

Rate the situation on a scale of 1 to 5 according to the following criteria:

A. *What is the scale of the proposed action?*

1	2	3	4	5
Isolated to a single facility at one site		→		Involves entire site or numerous sites

B. *Are the issues clear and priorities aligned?*

1	2	3	4	5
Issues are clear and priorities of the Department and stakeholders are aligned		→		Issues are not clear and/or priorities of the Department and stakeholders and not aligned

C. *Can the stakeholders be identified?*

1	2	3	4	5
Clearly identifiable		→		Not clearly identifiable

D. *Can stakeholders be contacted directly?*

1	2	3	4	5
All stakeholders can be contacted directly through customary communication links or networks		→		Most stakeholders cannot be contacted directly through customary communication links or networks

Group 1 Highest Single Score:	
Group 1 Total Score:	

GROUP 2 QUESTIONS – Focused on Interpersonal Dimensions

Rate the situation on a scale of 1 to 5 according to the following criteria:

E. What is the history of conflict regarding this particular site?

1	2	3	4	5
No issues regarding this site have been raised by stakeholders		→		Proposed uses of the site have been contested by stakeholders

F. What is the history of conflict regarding this type of facility?

1	2	3	4	5
No issues regarding this type of facility have been raised by stakeholders		→		Planning for this type of facility has often been contested by stakeholders

G. What is the Department's history of stakeholder relationships?

1	2	3	4	5
Prior relationships with key stakeholders have been positive		→		Prior relationships with key stakeholders have been contentious

H. What is the level of trust among stakeholders?

1	2	3	4	5
Reasonable trust		→		Little or no trust

Group 2 Highest Single Score: ☐

Group 2 Total Score: ☐

Evaluating Public Participation Processes

Public participation improves when you evaluate how you are doing and make the necessary changes (Creighton, 2007, p. 214). An evaluation that measures both tangible outcomes (the impacts and benefits) and process outcomes (fairness, trustworthiness, transparency) can ensure project goals were achieved. Evaluation, as a mechanism for accountability (and transparency), can illuminate changes needed in the public involvement process and shape future parks planning efforts.

An example of a comprehensive and external evaluation conducted using best practices criteria is included in the report for the City of Raleigh, titled *Involving the Public in Parks Planning: An Evaluation of the City of Raleigh's Park Master Planning Processes.* Less intensive evaluations can be designed and conducted by Parks Staff or by other designated individuals to evaluate the respective planning processes.

Fundamental evaluation questions to consider:

1. What is the core evaluation question?
2. Why is the evaluation being conducted (purpose)? For whom?
3. Who can contribute to the evaluation?
4. How will the information be collected?
5. What kind of information will be collected – Quantitative data? Qualitative data? Both?
6. Where will the information be collected (community meeting center, online, …)?
7. When will the information be collected (before the planning process, during the planning process, or after the planning process)?
8. How will the information collected be used?
9. Will a summary of the evaluation be provided to those who participated in the evaluation? To the larger public?

Evaluation Methods

The following list presents a few methods that can be utilized to evaluate a planning process. Many of these methods can be used to conduct an evaluation prior to the project, during, and after the project.

1. Surveys: collect standardized information using a structured format of closed-ended questions (results in quantitative data). Semi-structured surveys can generate both quantitative and qualitative data (using open-ended questions to surface details and perspectives), and provide readily available information. Surveys can be distributed by mail, email, online survey host (i.e., Survey Monkey), or conducted by phone. Surveys can be accomplished prior to a project to gather needed information to make pre-park planning decisions, during a project to assess the effectiveness of the plan and make

needed changes, and after the project to determine overall effectiveness in achieving the project goals.

2. Feedback gathered through informal conversations with individuals who can offer different perspectives during or following a planning meeting or event.

3. Feedback gathered from collaborating or supporting agencies during or following an event.

4. Focus group discussions with committee members as part of a process, or select members from various planning processes and bring them together to discuss benefits, impacts, and process outcomes.

5. Utilize other group techniques to collect evaluation information such as Nominal Group Technique, Delphi Process, or Community Brainstorming forums.

6. Pick key informants or members of the public who can offer different perspectives to observe and provide feedback at various intervals throughout a planning process.

7. Expert or peer review of planning processes: consider the value of an external review committee composed of a panel of experts or peers from another municipality to review a parks planning process.

Resources in Public Participation

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Weldon, Sue, *Social Science In Forestry: Public Participation And Partnership*, Edinburgh : Forestry Commission, 2004.

Appendix A: Conducting A Situation Assessment

CONDUCT A SITUATION ASSESSMENT

A situation assessment is an analysis of the local situation that helps the convener determine the best way to proceed and effectively deal with an issue that could be fairly contentious. The situation assessment is centered on two basic parameters that will shape the collaborative process: the issues that are important to stakeholders; and the characteristics of those stakeholders and the organizations they represent.

Ongoing assessment of the issues and other dynamics is essential to developing effective strategy and making wise choices in conflict situations. The following guide offers a series of questions to help identify useful information regarding the issue. The commentary is specifically focused on gathering and interpreting data that will help in convening a process where participants can effectively engage in solving a problem. Assessment is also useful for developing and clarifying parties' interests in preparation for problem deliberation. Broad participation in an analysis and assessment process by all the parties will help build a shared perspective on the problem and the steps necessary to move forward. Indeed, joint analysis is often a key step in bringing parties to the table.

For further information on how to conduct an assessment, see *Managing Public* Disputes by Susan Carpenter and W.J.D. Kennedy, Jossey Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1988, or *Working Through Environmental Conflict: The Collaborative Learning Approach* by Steven E. Daniels and Gregg B. Walker, Praeger, Westport CT, 2001.

Conducting a situation assessment before convening a collaborative process provides three major benefits:

1. The information gathering stage introduces possible stakeholders to the potential for a collaborative process as well as specifics about how such processes are conducted.
2. Participation in information gathering can help to build a shared perspective on the problem and the steps necessary to move forward.
3. The convener can determine the feasibility of entering into a collaborative process and the issues that may be amenable to a resolution.

Conducting a thorough situation assessment helps to accomplish the following:

- identifying stakeholders;
- assessing the political climate;
- identifying similar on-going efforts (avoiding duplication and encouraging partnerships);
- determining educational needs;

- building trust and recognition of the sponsoring agency and the facilitator;
- identifying issues of importance;
- identifying areas of conflict;
- identifying relationships and dynamics between stakeholders;
- generating interest in collaborative problem-solving and partnerships.

Some pitfalls of proceeding without an assessment include:

- leaving out key participants;
- not addressing appropriate issues;
- framing the issues in ways that will keep stakeholders from the table;
- proceeding without sufficient commitments; and
- having insufficient resources to complete the process.

The two sections that follow, *Understanding the Issues,* and *Understanding the Stakeholders*, pose a series of questions whose answers provide the framework for a solid, well-conceived collaborative process.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

Gaining a basic understanding of the issues can help the group orient toward a problem to be solved. Once the issues are clear, some determination can be made about how they can be approached.

Conditions for Controversy

In an ideal world, public participation would be rationally developed and participants would become involved to ensure that their interests are met. In the real world, another factor intervenes: controversy. As an issue evolves into controversy, its resolution becomes more difficult to achieve. A series of factors or conditions combine to create a climate for controversy. Among the more important conditions are:

- the issue affects the way people live, or affects them financially;
- the issue involves local activists who gain support and information from organizations outside the community;
- concern about the issues extends beyond the immediate community;
- public officials and the concerned public lack close and continuous contact;
- the situation represents high stakes for one or more people or organizations;
- the issue affects lives of different community members differently;
- stakeholders are capable of taking some action regarding this event or circumstance.

History of the Situation

The issue's history may be a guide to further action for individuals and organizations involved.

- Is the issue newly emerging, or have stakeholders been grappling with it over time?
- Have there been previous attempts to resolve the issue? Have some stakeholders perceived they lost something in the outcome?
- Do some stakeholders perceive a sense of past injustices over this issue or related issues?
- Have external events influenced the situation? How? Will they affect the decision-making process or the outcomes?

What are the issues?

- How does each stakeholder describe his own central issues?
- Do the issues differ for those who have the authority for the decision and those who seek to influence the decision?
- Is resolution of the issues likely to be precedent-setting?
- Are there secondary issues that may have an impact on the process or the outcome?
- Are the issues local, or do they involve people, organizations, and institutions at a larger geographical scale (regional, statewide, national, international)?
- Can the issues be framed to address the concerns of all the parties?

Is the timing of the issue appropriate?

- Is the community facing an emergency where quick action is required? If so, a collaborative process may not be appropriate.
- Is relevant information available?
- Are deadlines too tight?

How does each stakeholder see the available options for each issue?

- Have options been developed for each central issue? For secondary issues?
- Are the options well defined?
- Have all the potential options been explored by all stakeholders?
- Do any of the options seem to meet the needs of all of stakeholders?
- Does any stakeholder feel that none of the options meet his needs?
- If new options are generated, will extensive or expensive further study be required?

If all the potential options have been generated and none seems to meet the needs of the stakeholders, collaborative decision-making may be difficult. If new options can be created that better meet their needs, collaborative decision-making processes may be appropriate.

Are there any likely existing forums for resolving issues?

- Are there any forums that have been used to resolve similar situations in the past? Have they been perceived as productive?
- Do some of the issues require a certain kind of forum (i.e., constitutional issues may require court involvement)?

The existence of several forums may allow some parties to go forum shopping. Sometimes the choice of forum is limited by the issues.

Are Formal Processes Typically Used for Resolving These Issues?

- Can all the stakeholders use the formal process?
- Is the formal process adjudicative, administrative, consensual, or legislative?

The formal process often helps define the informal process. For instance, collaborative decision-making processes may only be able to produce advisory outcomes or recommendations though formal legislative or judicial action is needed.

Must External Parameters be Followed?

- Are there any statutes or regulations that govern action in this situation? Is there any flexibility?
- Have there been any similar situations whose outcomes will influence what happens here?

The external context may limit your possibilities for alternative solutions.

What are the Data and Information Needs?

- Do the stakeholders believe sufficient data are available?
- Are the data and their analysis considered trustworthy by the parties?
- Will each stakeholder feel comfortable working with a common body of data?

Developing a common understanding of the problem may require further data collection or additional analysis. Each stakeholder must feel comfortable with the data.

Will the Outcome Set New Precedents or be Focused Solely on Principle?

When the settlement sets a precedent for the resolution of similar issues to follow, parties often have too much at stake to negotiate effectively. The court system may the best venue for resolution of such an issue. When the focus of an issue is on basic differences in values, room for accommodation does not exist. Abortion is an example of such an issue.

UNDERSTANDING THE STAKEHOLDERS

Who are the Stakeholders?
Identifying the stakeholders is critical to the success of a consensus-building process. Frequently, individuals or organizations with a stake in the outcome attempt to destroy the process because they felt they were not involved in the process until it was too late to impact the decision.

Stakeholders include those who:

1) are affected or potentially affected by a solution,
2) have the potential to obstruct an agreement or its implementation.
3) have the authority to make the decision and/or the resources to carry it out.

Every member of a community may somehow be affected by an issue. Yet many will choose not to participate. They may believe that their views are already represented, their impact will be negligible, or the issue has already been decided. On the other hand, there may be those who are demanding to participate, but may – by perception or reality – be blocked from the process. The challenge in this case is to incorporate their views into the decision-making forum. Early on, it is often important to separate stakeholders into the categories of primary and secondary. **Primary stakeholders** are those, who because of power, status, position, or responsibility, are central to making the consensus agreement work. Primary stakeholders are often consulted about how to construct an acceptable decision-making process since the outcome needs to respond to their expectations. **Secondary stakeholders** may still need to be involved in the process, but their role is peripheral to the central role of primary stakeholders. Secondary stakeholders need to be kept informed as the process unfolds.

What Do Stakeholders Want?
Understanding stakeholder perspectives, motivation, and underlying interests can help you understand similarities and differences and find common interests. People's behavior and interpersonal interactions in social processes directly reflect their perspectives.

- What are the stated positions of each stakeholder?
- What are the stated goals of each stakeholder?
- What are the expectations of each stakeholder regarding processes and outcomes?
- What are the underlying interests of each stakeholder?
- What are the dominant values that appear to guide the actions of each stakeholder? Are they mutually exclusive?
- Do any of the positions, goals, interests, values, or issues of any stakeholder challenge the identity of other parties?
- Do any stakeholders view the issues as "high stake" issues?

Are there common interests that might provide the basis for an agreement? Do stakeholders perceive that they have favorable alternatives to a negotiated Agreement? If stakeholders have superior strategic alternatives to a collaborative process, they may pursue those alternatives. Collaborative processes may be particularly difficult to engage stakeholders who believe they have better alternative to a negotiated agreement.

Who are the Leaders?
Identifying leadership and ultimately determining representation of primary stakeholders is often a part of the process designer's task. Optimally, the stakeholders share responsibility for determining representation. Leaders likely to be influential often include those who:

- hold leadership positions in organizations with a stake in the issue;
- are perceived as influential by the stakeholders;
- have participated in prior similar decisions, and
- participate in a wide range of community activities.

Any person who comes from all four categories can be extremely influential.

How are the Stakeholders Organized?

- Are the primary stakeholders mostly organizational entities?
- What is their structure - hierarchical? Collective?
- Does each organization have identified leadership?
- What is the relationship between the leadership and others?

Government and private sector organizations often use hierarchical structures where all decision-making power is vested at the top. Citizen groups often have very flat hierarchies, that is, their organizational structure is collective. Here, leaders are not granted as much authority, and decision-making power is often vested with the members.

If the stakeholders come primarily from hierarchical organizations, each organization may only desire a few representatives at the table. On the other hand, if there are many organizations with grass-roots dominated structures, a much larger group of people may need to participate. There also are circumstances where many stakeholders are not represented by an organization. In these cases, the challenge is greater. The process is as important to individuals as it is to groups, and their involvement may be crucial to building and implementing consensus agreements.

If each party is well organized and will vest responsibility in its leadership, ascertaining representatives will be easier.

How Are the Stakeholders Linked?
Groups will often develop an identity based upon other groups they relate to. Some groups will be **horizontally linked** to similar groups. For example, a neighborhood association may be linked to similar associations through a federation. Those with horizontal links know their geographic community. Their contribution is often expertise in assessing community views, needs, and expectations.

Other groups will have **vertical links** to those outside the community. Professional groups such as bar associations and medical societies have these characteristics. In addition, many local chapters of national activist organizations such as the Sierra Club or the National Rifle Association also share this characteristic. Groups with vertical links often can bring technical expertise and sophisticated political experience to public involvement processes.

What is the Status of Stakeholder Relationships?
Past relationships that worked well can be the basis for developing collaborative decision-making efforts. Difficult relationships, especially those characterized by distrust, may need to be addressed directly for collaborative decision-making to be productive. If the current relationships are healthy, collaborative decision-making will help maintain strong relationships. If current relationships are contentious or characterized by lack of trust, either a strong past relationship, a desire for a future relationship, or high levels of interdependence can mitigate current difficulties. A desire for a future working relationship can be a strong impetus for using collaborative decision-making processes.

- Do any of the stakeholders have a history of relationships with other stakeholders?
- Has that history been productive or conflictive?
- Were the relationships characterized by trust and respect?
- Have any of the stakeholders avoided other stakeholders because they believed that working relationships would be difficult?
- Do any of the stakeholders desire a future working relationship with other stakeholders?
- Will the stakeholders need to work together on implementing an agreement?
- Are the stakeholders forced to interact regularly because of the nature of their work or networks?
- Are the stakeholders sufficiently interdependent so that they can meet their goals and satisfy their interests through cooperation?
- Are the stakeholders able to influence one another?
- Are the stakeholders capable of taking (or preventing) actions of one another to meet their goals and satisfy their interests?
- If the stakeholders are polarized, are productive, face-to-face discussions possible?

How do the Stakeholders Use Their Power and Influence?
Of the stakeholders who do not have formal authority for the decision, but seek to influence the decision:

- Does any stakeholder have the capacity to block decisions that they do not approve?
- Does any stakeholder have an incentive to escalate the conflict?
- What is the capacity of each stakeholder to sustain its involvement over time?
- Does any stakeholder need another in order to accomplish its goals? Does interdependence exist between these stakeholders and the decision makers?
- Have any stakeholders used their power to prevent others from reaching their goals? Have any used their power to help other stakeholders?

If some parties have the capacity to block decisions, they will certainly need to be involved in the process. If the parties have the capacity to sustain activities, they may be able to effectively participate in a collaborative decision-making process. If the parties need each other to accomplish their objectives, collaborative decision-making may be appropriate. If one of the parties has systematically used its power in a direct attempt to injure other parties, those parties will be distrustful and very wary of collaborative decision-making processes.
Of the parties who do have formal authority for the decision:

- Can they make and implement any decision they please?
- Are they constrained by previous decisions or decisions made by others? (e.g., legislative bodies, precedent)
- Can they sustain their involvement over time in any kind of process (e.g., legal, negotiated)
- Do they need others to accomplish their goals?

If the parties can make and implement any decision they please, reasons for entering collaborative decision-making will be for other than their substantive interests. If they cannot, they may seek a process where they can protect their essential interests and sustain their involvement over time.

Understanding the stakeholder population, their organizations, their networks, and the context in which they work can help you determine how to structure a conflict resolution or citizen involvement process that meets their needs.

Conducting Stakeholder Interviews
Gathering data about the issues and stakeholders may require you to conduct formal interviews of potential stakeholders. The following recommended practices provide guidance for conducting successful stakeholder interviews:

- Since many people may be distrustful of your intentions regarding the issue, always be open about your purpose
- Conducting a public meeting to announce the start of a project can help to identify interested stakeholders, and begin building recognition
- While phone interviews may suffice, in-person interviews help to build trust and rapport between the facilitator and stakeholders
- Conduct interviews within the project area in a casual community location (church, Cooperative Extension office, or other public facility)
- Offer to meet elderly or disabled stakeholders in their homes or at a local coffee shop
- Make interviewees comfortable by offering a drink or a snack
- Always ask permission to record stakeholders' comments, and tell them whether information they provide will be kept confidential or not
- Where relevant, bring documents, photos, maps or other background materials to show stakeholders
- Provide a description of terminology so that you and the stakeholder have a common understanding of the technical issues
- Begin an interview with open-ended questions to help an interviewee share perspectives without feeling pressured (e.g., what issues in this project area concern you?)
- Bring a list of questions to the interview
- It helps to have one person record so that another person can actively listen to the stakeholder without appearing distracted

Appendix B: Example of a Planning Committee Charter and Ground Rules

ELEMENTS OF A CHARTER

A charter defines the process protocols and gives a group a framework to follow. It is a written outline of the process and defines the intentions of the consensus process and how the process should be governed. The charter gives the group a framework in which to meet, discuss problems and solutions, and make decisions. It is an agreement between the members of the group, and as such it acts to bind the group together in a common language and working union.

A charter should be written for every consensus group that the Department convenes and organizes. The Department should provide an initial step in helping the group define its procedural rules. It is important that the group understands that this draft charter is not final, but simply a starting point. A first order of business for the newly constituted group would be to review the draft charter and modify it as necessary. The entire draft may need to be changed, but the group will have an idea of what a charter entails, allowing it to edit the draft to its purposes

A charter should contain the following elements:

- **Background and Project Description** – A summary overview of the park site and key issues.
- **Definitions** – terms and acronyms used in the planning process
- **Purpose** – explains why the committee has convened and what it intends to accomplish.
- **Final Product** – defines what the committee will produce and how their recommendations move forward through the PRGAB and City Council
- **Authority of the Committee** – describes the role of the committee in the decision process
- **Committee Members** – Lists the committee members and their affiliations
- **Responsibilities of the Committee**
    - Conduct – Expectations for how committee members will conduct themselves during the process
    - Attendance – Expectations for attendance and participation
    - Preparation for Meetings – States that participants should read all appropriate materials and arrive prepared to work.
    - Informing Constituents – Expectations for how and how often committee members are to keep their constituents informed of the process
- **Responsibilities of the Consultant/Facilitator** – Describes the responsibilities of the consultant/facilitator during and after the meeting.
- **Agendas** – Identifies who is responsible and how they will be drafted.

- **Meeting Summaries** – Identifies how meeting summaries will be prepared and distributed.
- **Decision Process** – Describes how the committee will reach decisions. If consensus is the decision rule, the charter should outline the method by which consensus will be defined. It should also describe what will occur if consensus is not reached.
- **Ground Rules for Interaction** – Lists the rules that will be followed during meetings.
- **Enforcement of Ground Rules** – Describes how rules will be monitored and enforced.
- **Consequences of Violating the Charter** – Describes consequences if committee members choose to violate the charter.
- **Input From and Information to the Public** – Identifies how the public will be informed and involved
- **Schedule and Duration** – Describes how often the committee will meet, how long meetings will be and when the group intends to complete its work.
- **Amendments to the Charter** – Describes how the charter can be amended by the committee.

A template for Planning Committee Charter follows.

EXAMPLE OF A PLANNING COMMITTEE CHARTER

This is an example of a group charter that a Planning Committee can use to tailor their specific circumstances.

1. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background information about the park or facility site and description of proposed actions.

2. DEFINITIONS

Terms, abbreviations, and acronyms used in the planning process.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Planning Committee is to provide recommendations to the Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Greenways Advisory Board (PRGAB) for a total park program that will best meet the needs of the community that the park program is intended to serve.

There are four major goals of the consensus process: 1) to provide Committee Members with a process of discovery, information sharing, and education; 2) to provide Committee Members with a direct role in developing, reviewing, and discussing the studies necessary to support the license application; 3) to provide Committee Members with a direct role in shaping agreements that resolve the issues and balance the interests relative to the development of [Park Name], and 4) to take measures to inform the public about the topics being addressed in the process.

4. FINAL PRODUCTS

The Planning Committee will develop four products: (1) a Program Statement, (2) a Draft Master Plan, (3) Priorities for Phased Development, and (4) a Proposed Plan.

A. A ***Program Statement*** describes the overall vision for the park, including uses, sensitivity to natural elements, identity, history, and other characteristics as appropriate. The Program Statement should be consistent with the System Integration Plan and the Parks, Recreation and Greenways Comprehensive Plan Elements. The Program Statement should include reference to the ecological significance and functions of the site and its relationship to the larger citywide and countywide facilities and their functions.

   Based on the Program Statement, the design professionals will develop alternative site-related diagrams representing a range of Plan Alternatives. The committee will select the concept that best accomplishes the Program Statement goals.

B. The ***Draft (Master, Strategic, Ad Hoc) Plan*** shall include the conceptual plan rendering, the Program Statement, other background information as appropriate, a written description of the intent of the Plan concept proposed, including the established elements of other previously adopted Plans, as well as recommendations for environmental stewardship of the park site and development of the park project.

C. The Planning Committee shall identify ***Priorities*** for phased development of the project, with consideration given to information on existing and anticipated funding.

D. The Program Statement, Draft Plan, and Phasing Priorities will be made available for public review and comment. The Planning Committee will address comments received and develop a ***Proposed Plan***. The Proposed Plan will include the final conceptual plan rendering, program statement, other background information as appropriate, written description of the intent of the Plan concept proposed, and recommendations for phased development of the park project, as well as the established elements of other previously adopted master plans. The Proposed Plan will be forwarded to the PRGAB for their consideration.

5. AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE

The [Name of Stakeholder Group] is an advisory group that reports its recommendations to the PRGAB. Plans, Program Statements and Priorities generated by the Committee may be accepted in whole, in part, or rejected at the discretion of the PRGAB.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPRESENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Representation

The Planning Committee should be representative of persons with interests in the park and appropriate uses. Representation on the Committee should take into account demographics of the area including age, race, gender, educational background, professional/personal experience, and other relevant qualifications related to the characteristics of the park involved.

Stakeholder groups may be represented by a Primary Committee Member and an Alternate Committee Member. In the event that a Primary Committee Member cannot attend a meeting, he/she may be represented by the Alternate Committee Member of his/her choosing without concurrence of the Committee. Alternate Committee Members are encouraged to attend Committee meetings along with the Primary Committee Member, but should be fully briefed by the Primary Committee Member before attending any meetings as the sole representative.

Committee Members will be expected to represent the interests of (1) themselves, (2) organizations that have authorized the Committee Member to represent them, or (3) groups of constituents from a similar interest group.

B. Responsibilities

Deliberating in Good Faith

Committee Members will share information with constituents and share their interests with other Committee Members. The primary responsibility of a Committee Member is to balance interests and participate in the development of the Proposed Plan. Committee Members will endeavor in good faith to develop a consensus Proposed Plan that is satisfactory to all Committee Members. Committee Members will ensure an integrated approach is taken in drafting the Proposed Plan by meeting together as needed to assure strong communication and collaboration between all the Committee Members.

Representing Constituents

In developing a Draft Master Plan, Committee Members will consider the interests of all Raleigh residents as well as their own particular interest group when reviewing issues and recommendations. Committee Members will invite proposals from their constituents to present to the Planning Committee and will provide proposals from the Committee to their constituents for feedback and input.

Attending Meetings

Each Committee Member is expected to attend and fully participate in each meeting, which includes being present for substantially all of the meeting. Committee Members shall read appropriate materials and arrive prepared to work. Materials presented for discussion should be distributed at least one week in advance of the meeting, as practical.

In the event that neither the Primary Committee Member nor the Alternate Committee Member is able to attend a meeting of the Committee, and the Primary Committee Member is not in agreement with any actions taken by the Committee during his/her absence, that Member has until the meeting summary review at the next meeting to register his/her dissatisfaction with actions taken. A reasonable amount of time will be devoted to old business at meetings. E-mail may be used to expedite this process.

C. Appointment, Withdrawal and Replacement

Members and Alternates.

In the event that a Committee Member cannot attend a meeting, he/she may be represented by an alternate of his/her choosing without concurrence of the Committee. Alternates are encouraged to attend Committee meetings along with the Committee member, but should be fully briefed by the Committee member before attending any meetings as the sole representative.

Voluntary Withdrawal and Replacement Appointments. If a Committee member withdraws from the Committee, he/she may appoint a replacement (typically their alternate) from the same organization without concurrence of the Committee. If the member is unable to appoint a replacement from his/her organization, the Department may appoint a replacement member from the same interest group or neighborhood.

New Member Appointments. A strong effort was made during the forming of the Committee to encourage participation by representatives from all the various interests in the study area. While it is certainly the Committee's desire to be inclusive and sensitive to the many various interests, the Committee recognizes the need to remain focused and moving ahead if the Committee's goal (i.e. a set of consensus recommendations) is to be achieved. When evaluating potential new members, the Committee should first ensure that the interests that the potential new member would represent can not reasonably be covered by an existing Committee member. If the Committee decides there is in fact a need to have additional interests represented, then the Committee will identify potential candidates and review their qualifications (e.g. past experience in collaborative team processes, knowledge about the issues and the interests they represent, communications mechanisms for sharing information, etc.). The Committee will decide by consensus if a particular candidate should be added to the Committee.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITATOR

The roles and responsibilities of the Facilitators include:

- Facilitating meetings in a manner consistent with interest-based negotiations and this charter;
- Handling meeting logistics;
- Keeping meeting attendance records of all Committee Members;
- Helping the Committee stay on task and on process;
- Protecting Committee Members and their ideas from attack, while ensuring that provocative issues are not avoided, but are discussed in a candid and respectful manner;
- Helping Committee Members to concisely describe their interests;
- Helping Committee Members find innovative and workable solutions;

- Helping Committee Members reach;
- Providing for equitable participation by all Committee Members;
- Working, both at and between meetings, with Committee Members to assist in the free exchange of ideas between the Members and to resolve any impasses that may arise;
- Periodically surveying a sampling of Committee Members to assess fairness, meaningfulness, and efficiency of the process;
- Maintaining a list of significant topics on which the Committee(s) have reached consensus or have failed to reach consensus;
- Acting as contact point and spokesperson for the stakeholder process and its progress (except when otherwise agreed to by the Committees) for the public and the media.

8. MEETING SUMMARIES AND AGENDAS

A. Meeting Summaries

The facilitator will develop meeting summaries within 14 days following the Committee meetings and will notify Committee Members of their availability. E-mail will be the primary form of information dispersal and correspondence within the Committee with the option of having material faxed or mailed to those who do not have email or web access. Summaries shall include an attendance record, a summary of actions taken at the meeting, and other information pertaining to the deliberations. In general, discussion of new substantive issues will not commence until the summary of the preceding meeting is approved.

B. Agendas

At the end of each meeting, the Committee will specify a tentative agenda for the following meeting. The Facilitator will develop draft meeting agendas prior to each meeting. Final agendas including any added topics will be approved by the Committee at the start of each meeting and will include opportunities for public comment.

9. DECISION PROCESS

The Committee will operate by consensus of all members represented at the meeting. Consensus is the decision rule that allows collaborative problem solving to work. It is a way for more than two people to reach agreement. Consensus prevents domination by the majority, allows building of trust, and the sharing of information, especially under conditions of conflict. Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision, but all do accept that the decision is the best that can be made at the time with the people involved.

Consensus requires sharing information, which leads to mutual education, which provides the basis for crafting workable and acceptable alternatives. Consensus promotes joint thinking of a diverse group and leads to creative solutions. Also, because parties participate in the deliberation, they understand the reasoning behind the recommendations and are willing to support them.

In making decisions, each Committee member will indicate his/her concurrence on a specific proposal using a five-point scale. The scale allows Committee members to clearly communicate their intentions, assess the degree of agreement that exists, and register their dissatisfaction without holding up the rest of the Committee. The five-point scale is as follows:

1. Endorsement –Member likes it.
2. Endorsement with Minor Point of Contention – Basically, member likes it).
3. Agreement with Minor Reservations – Member can live with it.
4. Stand aside with major reservations – Formal disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision
5. Block – Member will not support the Proposed Plan.

Facilitators will measure the Committee's consensus on a given proposal by open polling of the members present. The levels of consensus are:

- Consensus - All Committee members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2 or 3.
- Consensus with Major Reservations – All Committee members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2 or 3, except at least one Committee member rates it as a 4.
- No Consensus - Any Committee member present rates the proposal as a 5.

10. GROUND RULES FOR INTERACTION

In order to have the most efficient and effective process possible, Committee Members will follow these basic ground rules:

Discussion Ground Rules During the Meetings

- Raise hand to be recognized by the Facilitator.
- Speak one at a time in meetings as recognized by the Facilitator. Everyone will participate, but none will dominate.
- Be concise and stick to the topics on the meeting agenda. Honor a two-minute time limit for statements and responses unless the Facilitator allows more time.
- Speak only on one topic per entry (no laundry lists).
- Speak to the whole group when talking.
- Avoid side conversations.

- Avoid off-topic questions.
- Treat each other, the organizations represented in the Committee, and the Committee itself with respect at all times.
- Refrain from interrupting.
- Monitor your own participation – everyone should participate, but none should dominate.
- Adhere to the agenda and time schedule with diligence.
- Put cell phones on "vibrate" and leave the room when a call is received.
- Be prepared to start on time.
- Recognize that everyone's interests are important.
- Avoid repetitiveness (i.e., one-track-mind behavior).
- Agree that it is okay to disagree, and disagree without being disagreeable.
- Avoid "cheap shots" and/or sarcasm.
- Refrain from hostility and antagonism.
- Leave personal agendas and "baggage" at the door; put personal differences aside in the interest of a successful Committee.
- Focus on the problem, not the person.

Process Ground Rules Throughout the Planning Process

- Adhere to the charter.
- Review information and stay informed.
- Work as team players and share all relevant information. Ask if they do not understand.
- Encourage free thinking. Offer mutually beneficial solutions.
- Encourage candid, frank discussions. Be honest and tactful. Avoid surprises.
- Openly express any disagreement or concern with all other Committee Members. Focus on the problem, not the person.
- Actively strive to see the other points of view.
- Follow through on commitments.
- Share information discussed in the meeting with the organizations / constituents represented and bring back to the Committee the opinions and actions of their constituencies as appropriate.

- Communicate the requirements of this charter with the organizations they represent to minimize the possibility of actions contrary to the charter.
- Commit to issues in which they have an interest.
- Support and actively engage in the Committees' decision process.

11. SCHEDULE AND DURATION

12. AMENDMENTS TO THIS CHARTER

Changes to the charter can be made at any meeting of the Committee by consensus.

Appendix C: Making Consensus Work

Consensus is the decision rule that allows collaborative problem solving to work. It is a way for more than two people to reach agreement. Consensus can build trust in order to share information and generate potential solutions to resolve an issue, especially under conditions of conflict.   Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision, rather that the decision is the best one that can be made at the time with the people involved.

Consensus requires sharing information and mutual education. This exchange of information provides the basis for creating workable and acceptable alternatives. Consensus promotes joint thinking of a diverse group and leads to expansion of ideas and solutions in addressing an issue. In addition, because parties participate in the deliberation, they understand the reasoning behind the recommendations and are willing to support them. The goal is to make decisions based on open discussions and use an approach that is flexible, specific to the situation, and does not usually require a formal voting mechanism.

A number of essential principles underlie the practice of consensus and contribute to its success.

- To achieve consensus, everyone in the group actively participates.
- To participate fully and freely, all group members develop a common base of information and understanding about the problem, keeping informed and current on the progress of the group or committee.
- The group (or committee) creates and maintains an atmosphere in which everyone feels free to state his or her views and to respectfully disagree.
- Disagreements should be respected; they can illuminate unrecognized problems and serve as a catalyst for improving the decision.
- When someone objects or disagrees, the goal of the group (or committee) is to discover the unmet need that has produced the objection and to find a way to meet that need in a revised agreement, rather than to suppress the objection.

Consensus Scale

Throughout the consensus process, the Planning Committee (or other consensus-based stakeholder group) will be making numerous interim decisions as they work toward a final Draft Plan. For most of the interim decisions that the Committee will make, the facilitator(s) will informally test for consensus after appropriate discussions by stating the proposal and asking whether this is acceptable to the group. At this point the group will discover what each member think about the proposal, identify specific concerns, and then refine the proposal to the degree that all participants can at least “live with it.” If multiple proposals are before the group, the members of the committee may want to discover what each member thinks about the various proposals before refining them.

Rather than using a YES/NO vote for a participant to register his/her agreement or disagreement to a proposal, we propose using a five-point scale that assesses gradients of agreement among participants. The scale allows participants to communicate their intentions of support more clearly and permits an assessment of the gradients of agreement that exist. The scale allows more precise interpretation of support for a decision, from enthusiastic support, through luke-warm, to qualified support or non-support. Everyone can judge whether the degree of support warrants continued action.

The five-point scale allows participants to show their level of agreement to a given proposal by the number of fingers they hold up:

1 Finger: Endorsement (I like it)

2 Fingers: Endorsement with a Minor Point of Contention (Basically, I like it)

3 Fingers: Endorsement with Reservations (I can live with it)

4 Fingers: Stand Aside (I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group)

5 Fingers: Block (I won't support the proposal)

If all members of the group express approval at levels 1, 2, 3 or 4, then they have reached consensus. If some members continue to disagree sufficiently to block the proposal (level 5), then consensus has not been reached. The challenge to the group is to see what interest must be addressed in the proposal to move people at 5 to 4 (or higher) and from 4 to 3 (or higher).

It is important to find out the nature of disagreements with a proposal. It is often helpful to characterize concerns as follows:

- Minor concerns with wording or editing.
- Agreement with the main thrust of the proposal, but concerns with specific elements that, if changed, would lead to agreement.
- Major concerns: principled disagreement with the overall direction of the proposal, which if not addressed, would lead the member to block the consensus.

Appendix D: Selecting a Facilitator

Selecting a facilitator to assist participants in parks and recreation planning processes requires an understanding of the types of facilitation skills and level of experience needed to help the group. In general, the qualifications and level of experience needed of a facilitator will be greater for Consensus Seeking processes than for Feedback and Consultation. The more contentious the situation, the more experienced and skilled the facilitator should be. In-house facilitators might be appropriate in either Feedback and Consultation processes or Consensus-Seeking processes when stakeholders are generally trustful of the Department and other stakeholders, the Department's prior relationships with stakeholders have been positive, and no issues regarding the proposed site or action have been raised by stakeholders. If any of the above is not the case, it is advisable to use an outside facilitator.

Select a Facilitator with the Right Skills[9]

The skills and abilities required to facilitate Consensus-Seeking processes and public meetings for feedback and consultation include the ability to:

- Communicate and listen effectively
- Analyze and assess planning situations
- Design processes in consultation with participants
- Assist participants to negotiate effectively
- Organize and manage meetings effectively and ensure full and balanced participation
- Assist participants to meet their objectives through the use of a variety of processes
- Manage complex information and data
- Coordinate activities and communications among participants and their constituents, resource people, and Department staff

A facilitator should take a strategic view of the planning process and apply it to a coherent group participation process. He or she should understand the needs of the group and the requirements of the tasks, design an appropriate strategy in advance, and describe to the group how they might proceed through various phases to solve the problem and reach a decision.

Although a detailed plan is valuable, versatility and flexibility are also important. A facilitator should be able to describe alternative scenarios or suggest how the agenda might vary depending on how things actually work out at each stage.

Factors to consider in determining the competence of a facilitator include:

- Amount of experience in relevant situations and processes

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[9] The facilitator skills and qualifications described here are adapted from *Getting the Most Out of Collaborative Stakeholder Processes,* a workshop workbook by Chris Carlson, Policy Consensus Initiative, Portland OR, 1999. Used with permission by the author.

- Types of experience
- Training and or/apprenticeship relevant to the service to be provided
- Knowledge of and/or experience with parks and recreation planning processes
- References by consumers of their services and other experts who have worked with them
- Professional affiliations, certifications, and adherence to codes of ethics
- Personal style